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NEWS RELEASE

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UM STUDENTS HAVE FEWER RESOURCES, HIGHER IDEALS

MISSOULA--

Compared to their peers across the country, freshmen entering The University of Montana last year were more influenced by the desire to learn interesting things and to become cultured individuals, according to a national survey.

UM freshmen were less likely than nationwide freshmen to say that getting a better job and making more money were important in their decision to attend college, even though they were far more concerned about their ability to finance their educations.

The UCLA Freshmen Survey has been given to students at colleges and universities across the United States since 1966. The largest and longest-running such survey of American college students, it measures reasons for attending college, financial circumstances, academic activities, political orientation and lifestyles. More than half a million students participate in the survey each year.

According to University Center Director Gary Ratcliff, UM has three main reasons for giving the survey to students: "First, we can learn about the challenges and concerns facing our students and try to address them through our programs and services. Second, we can see which characteristics are associated with academic success and which are not, and use this information in

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advising incoming students. Third, we can educate faculty and staff about what today's students are like."

Nearly 34 percent of incoming freshmen took the survey during UM's orientation last summer, when it was administered by Admissions and New Student Services.

The survey found that students' reasons for attending college ranked about the same at UM and nationally, but UM freshmen gave more weight to culture and less to cash.

- UM freshmen rated learning about "things of interest" as their top reason for attending college (83 percent), followed by being able to get a better job (64 percent) and gaining a general education (64 percent).
- By contrast, the national norm for public universities showed 75 percent of students said learning about things of interest was "very important" in their decision to attend college.
- Seventy-one percent of nationwide freshmen said being able to make more money was very important, compared with 67 percent of in-state UM freshmen and 50 percent of out-of-state UM freshmen.

In choosing to attend UM in particular, students said the school's "very good academic reputation" was very important (35 percent), followed by low tuition (24 percent) and "good social reputation" (24 percent). However, among out-of-state students, 38 percent said UM's size was an important factor, compared with only 20 percent of in-state students.

UM's in-state students reported fewer financial resources than out-of-state students, and were more likely to work and take out loans to finance their education.

- Only 52 percent of in-state freshmen reported that their parents earned more than

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\$40,000 per year, compared with 85 percent of out-of-state students and 77 percent of students at all public universities.

- Forty-seven percent of in-state freshmen and 84 percent of out-of-state freshmen expected to receive \$1,500 or more from their parents or other relatives toward first-year educational expenses.
- Seventy-eight percent of in-state freshmen vs. 53 percent of out-of-state freshmen had “some” or “major” concerns about their ability to finance their education.
- Only 22 percent of in-state freshmen said they had no concerns about their ability to finance their education, compared with 46 percent of out-of-state freshmen.
- Nationally, 10 percent of students expected to receive \$1,500 or more in Stafford Loans their first year in college, compared with 21 percent of in-state UM freshmen and 17 percent of out-of-state UM freshmen.

The survey reflected some noticeable gender gaps when it came to finances:

- Among in-state freshmen at UM, 60 percent of male students said their parents earned more than \$40,000, compared with 45 percent of female students.
- Seventy-one percent of males vs. 60 percent of females expected to receive \$1,500 or more from their parents or other relatives toward first-year educational expenses.
- Among in-state freshmen, males were more likely than females to report paying for college with savings (18 percent vs. 15 percent), while females were more likely to report they would have a part-time job (9 percent vs. 6 percent) or a full-time job (5 percent vs. 2 percent).

- Females were more likely than males to receive \$1,500 or more in Pell Grants (17 percent vs. 14 percent), state scholarships or grants (15 percent vs. 3 percent) and college scholarships or grants (22 percent vs. 6 percent).

UM freshmen were slightly less likely than their peers nationwide to report a high school grade-point average of 4.0 (22 percent vs. 25 percent). They also were less likely to say they planned to pursue a graduate degree (67 percent vs. 74 percent). Among UM students, 75 percent of freshmen males said they plan to pursue a graduate degree, compared with only 58 percent of females. Similar to freshmen nationally, many UM freshmen reported being bored in class (46 percent) and coming late to class (70 percent) during their last year of high school.

- UM students were more likely than nationwide freshmen to say they needed tutoring or remedial work in mathematics, but less likely to say the same for English.
- UM freshmen were more likely to have read a newspaper editorial page within the previous year (71 percent vs. 65 percent).
- UM students were more likely to say they checked a book out from the library during the previous year (24 percent vs. 20 percent).
- UM students were more cultured than their peers, with 87 percent saying they'd attended a recital or concert in the previous year (compared with 80 percent nationally), and 70 percent saying they'd visited an art gallery or museum (compared with 58 percent).

UM freshmen also were more likely to rate as "essential or very important objectives" writing original works (28 percent vs. 13 percent), creating artistic works (26 percent vs. 14

percent) and developing a meaningful philosophy of life (53 percent vs. 43 percent).

- Among UM freshmen, males rated as essential or very important becoming an authority in their field (63 percent), obtaining recognition from their colleagues (59 percent) and developing a meaningful philosophy of life (51 percent).
- Females rated as essential or very important helping others in difficulty (64 percent), becoming an authority in their field (58 percent) and developing a meaningful philosophy of life (54 percent).

Politically, most UM freshmen characterized their views as middle of the road (51 percent), similar to national norms (53 percent).

- Thirty-five percent of UM freshmen say they are politically liberal, compared with 24 percent of nationwide freshmen.
- Eleven percent of UM freshmen and 20 percent of nationwide freshmen say they are conservative.
- Four percent of UM freshmen characterize themselves as far left, similar to national rates of 2 percent.
- One percent of both UM freshmen and nationwide freshmen say they are far right.

UM's out-of-state residents are slightly more likely than Montana students to indicate they are politically middle of the road. Out-of-state students also are slightly more likely to say they are liberal or far left, and less likely to say they are conservative or far right. UM's female freshmen are more likely to call themselves liberal than males (40 percent vs. 29 percent). Every other political category has slightly fewer females than males.

Compared with national norms, a smaller percentage of UM in-state freshmen reported

frequently socializing with someone of another race or ethnic group in their last year in high school (44 percent vs. 64 percent). However, the percentage of in-state freshmen who value promoting racial understanding as an essential or very important objective slightly exceeds the national norm (30 percent and 28 percent), and in the case of in-state females, significantly exceeds it (37 percent vs. 31 percent).

- UM freshmen males ranked as essential or very important keeping up with political affairs (37 percent), promoting racial understanding (32 percent), influencing social values (28 percent) and cleaning up the environment (28 percent).
- UM freshmen females ranked as essential or very important influencing social values (54 percent), promoting racial understanding (39 percent) and cleaning up the environment (36 percent).

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